

Understand Boston

BOSTON TODAY 190

Two new execs face challenges and opportunities – legalized gambling, dysfunctional transportation systems and dreams of Olympic glory.

HISTORY 192

The history of Boston is the history of a nation, from the earliest settlement to the recent past.

ARTS & ARCHITECTURE 201

Once dubbed the Athens of America, Boston is a cauldron of creativity, where art, architecture, music and literature continue to thrive.

UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES 204

From September to May, Boston overflows with the exuberance of the local student population – a renewable source of cultural energy.

Boston Today

Boston is at a turning point. Major urban development projects have been completed, neighborhoods have been transformed, the waterfronts are sparkling and the cityscape looks fantastic. Boston is thriving economically. There's a new mayor at the helm – and he's thinking big. Predictably, the challenges facing Boston are also big. That's okay...we need something to grumble about.

Best on Film

The Verdict (1982) Paul Newman as a Boston lawyer.

Good Will Hunting (1997) Put Southie on the Hollywood map.

Next Stop Wonderland (1997) Heartwarming independent film with a bossa nova soundtrack.

The Departed (2006) Suspense-filled mob movie that won Best Picture.

John Adams (2008) Critically acclaimed TV series chronicling the life and times of the second US president.

Best in Print

The Scarlet Letter (Nathaniel Hawthorne; 1850) Hypocrisy and malice in Puritan New England.

The Given Day (Dennis Lehane; 2008) A suspense-filled historical novel, following two families through the turmoil of post-WWI Boston.

Interpreter of the Maladies (Jhumpa Lahiri; 1999) A Pulitzer Prize-winner that addresses the challenges of migration and multiculturalism.

The Friends of Eddie Coyle (George Higgins, 1972) A crime novel that provides a crash course in the Boston dialect.

Infinite Jest (David Foster Wallace; 1996) A 1000-page tome that is at once philosophical and satirical.

Changing of the Guard

After serving five terms for a total of 20 years, Thomas Menino stepped down as the mayor of Boston in 2014. Menino was Boston's longest-serving mayor, credited with reviving neighborhoods, taking a stand for LGBT rights and greening the city. The 'mayor for life' died later that same year.

The current mayor, Marty Walsh, has big shoes to fill. A Dorchester native and Boston College graduate, Walsh served in the Massachusetts House of Representative for 13 years before being elected mayor. While campaigning, Walsh promised to turn Boston into a 24-hour city. To that end, Bostonians can now ride the T until 2am on weekends. Thanks, Mr Mayor!

Also in 2014, Deval Patrick declined to run for reelection as the Governor of Massachusetts, after two terms in office. The Commonwealth's first African American governor, Patrick's legacy includes improvements in education, an overhaul of the Department of Transportation and the introduction of casino gaming. His successor is Republican Charlie Baker.

Taking a Gamble

In 2011, the Massachusetts legislature passed a law that would allow the establishment of three resort-style casinos and one slot parlor in the Commonwealth. Although casino gaming promises jobs and revenue, it is not without detractors; but a statewide referendum failed to repeal the legislation.

Among the sites selected for the gaming facilities is Everett, an industrial city, largely populated by immigrants, four miles north of Boston. The gambling giant Wynn Resorts has promised to clean up a former industrial wasteland on the Mystic River and transform the site into a casino resort. The development has been mired in controversy, not least because a convicted